

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-9, and 11-14 are pending in the application upon entry of this amendment. Claims 1, 4, 8, and 11 have been amended herein. Claims 3 and 10 have been canceled. Favorable reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicant acknowledges, with appreciation, the Examiner's finding that claims 3 and 10 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Furthermore, applicant acknowledges the Examiner's finding that claims 4-7 and 11-14 would be allowable upon the rewriting of claims 3 and 10, because these claims are dependent from claims 3 and 10.

In accordance with the findings of the Examiner, Applicant has amended each of independent claims 1 and 8 to respectively include the subject matter of claims 3 and 10.

Applicant submits that, although independent claims 1 and 8 have not been amended to respectively include the features of intervening claims 2 and 9, the allowability of claims 1 and 8 as amended is not believed to be adversely affected. Neither Kikuchi et al. nor Mankovitz teach the features of claims 1 and 8 as amended to incorporate claims 3 and 10, respectively, even in the absence of respectively intervening claims 2 and 9.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 1 and 8 as amended incorporate the features of claims 3 and 10, respectively, and are allowable. Therefore, the application is placed in a condition of allowance.

REJECTION OF CLAIMS 1, 2, 8, AND 9 UNDER 35 USC §§102(e)/103(a)

Claims 1 and 8 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by Kikuchi et al. (US Patent No. 7,136,573). Claims 2 and 9 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being Kikuchi et al. in view of Mankovitz (US Patent No. 5,541,738).

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As discussed above, independent claims 1 and 8 have been amended to include the allowable subject matter of claims 3 and 10, respectively. Furthermore, claims 2 and 9 respectively depend from independent claims 1 and 8, and include at least the features thereof. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections under 35 USC §§102(e)/103(a) is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, all claims 1, 2, 4-9, and 11-14 are believed to be allowable and the application is believed to be in condition for allowance. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner feel that a telephone interview would be helpful to facilitate favorable prosecution of the above-identified application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below.

Should a petition for an extension of time be necessary for the timely reply to the outstanding Office Action (or if such a petition has been made and an additional extension is necessary), petition is hereby made and the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees (including additional claim fees) to Deposit Account No. 18-0988.

Respectfully submitted,

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